

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

Contact: Phil Trowbridge, Coastal Scientist, New Hampshire Estuaries Project

Phone: 603- 271-8872

Email ptrowbridge@des.state.nh.us.

Dover Gets Help Answering Hard Questions about Hard Surfaces

Recently, representatives of the Dover Conservation Commission and the Dover Planning Board received a valuable packet of information from the New Hampshire Estuaries Project that explained how impervious surfaces affect water quality in the community. The packet describes the extent of Dover's impervious surfaces from 2000 and also suggests several ways the community can minimize its negative impact on the city's water resources. Dover was one of 42 towns in the coastal watershed that received information packets.

Impervious surfaces are areas covered by material that impedes the infiltration of water into the soil, such as buildings, pavement, concrete and severely compacted soils. When rainwater falls on these areas, it quickly runs into storm sewers and into surface waters instead of soaking into the ground. So quickly, in fact, that it causes flooding and bank erosion. Also, as the rainwater flows over these surfaces, its temperature increases and it picks up pollutants, such as motor oil. The resulting influx of warmer, polluted water lowers water quality.

The information packet received by the Dover Planning Board and Conservation Commission indicated that approximately 15% of the city's land area was covered by impervious surfaces in 2000, which is an increase from 11% in 1990. According to some studies, water quality begins to become impaired when the watershed land area is 10% covered with impervious surfaces. The information packet also included an impervious surface fact sheet that describes the impacts of impervious surfaces on water quality, a list of technical assistance programs and resources, and a map of impervious surfaces in the City of Dover. The map clearly shows the areas most impacted by impervious surfaces and their relation to critical water resources, conservation lands, roads, and sewer and water supply systems. The maps will help the community to direct future development to areas with the least impact on water quality. Also, the map identifies areas without impervious surfaces, which would be ideal for land protection efforts.

Phil Trowbridge, the Coastal Scientist for the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, notes that Dover is now at a critical stage in protecting its water quality. “When a community has greater than 10% impervious surface coverage, as is the case with Dover, the emphasis needs to be on smart growth planning and implementing effective stormwater management strategies to cope with the continued growth in the community.”

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project will be funding the University of New Hampshire to update impervious surface cover data using 2005 imagery. This new data will be available to communities in 2006. For more information about impervious surfaces contact Phil Trowbridge, Coastal Scientist, New Hampshire Estuaries Project at 603- 271-8872 or ptrowbridge@des.state.nh.us.

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project is a collaborative program funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency that involves governmental agencies, universities, non-profit organizations, businesses, and the public to protect, enhance and monitor the environmental quality of the state’s coastal bays and rivers. The NHEP Management Plan, project reports and other resources are available at www.nh.gov/nhep.

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